

If it is reducing the number of infections that you suffer from and / or significantly reducing your symptoms such as cough, sputum production and breathlessness, then we usually like to keep it going.

Can Azithromycin interact with any of my other tablets?

Yes – Azithromycin can potentially interact with Theophylline tablets, which are used to treat airways diseases, by increasing the blood levels of this drug. The trade names of this drug are: Uniphyllin, Slo-Phyllin, Neulin SA or Phyllocontin.

Azithromycin can also possibly interact with the blood thinning drug Warfarin and the heart drug Digoxin leading to increased blood levels of these drugs. If you are taking any of these drugs, you will require additional blood tests and the doses of these drugs may need to be adjusted.

This list is not exhaustive and always consult your doctor and/or pharmacist before starting any new medicine.

What should I do if I suffer a flare up of my chest disease?

Although Azithromycin is an antibiotic, you will still need to take courses of antibiotics for flare ups/chest infections in the usual way. You should stop taking your Azithromycin when starting a course of antibiotics.

Should Azithromycin be stopped for surgery?

You do not have to stop taking your tablets prior to surgery. If in doubt, check with your respiratory consultant and the consultant who is doing the surgery.

Does Azithromycin alter fertility or pregnancy?

Azithromycin has no known consequences for fertility. Its safety in pregnancy is not fully known and the manufacturers of the drug suggest only using it if there are no alternatives. We therefore, recommended effective contraception for women on Azithromycin.

Can I drink alcohol when taking Azithromycin?

Yes – there is no interaction with alcohol

Respiratory Department

Azithromycin Patient Information Leaflet

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Published June 2017 - version 1
Review due June 2019

Information accurate at time of going to print.
With thanks to The Northern Bronchiectasis Group

This information leaflet is to give you information about the drug Azithromycin.

What is Azithromycin?

Azithromycin belongs to a group of medicines called macrolide antibiotics. Antibiotics are used to treat infections caused by microorganisms like bacteria.

Why have I been prescribed Azithromycin?

You have been prescribed Azithromycin in order to try and improve control of your chest symptoms. Using Azithromycin in this way is outside its product licence.

Azithromycin potentially works in two different ways:

- Firstly, it is an antibiotic and is capable of killing a number of the bugs (bacteria) that cause chest infections.
- Secondly, it appears to have a powerful anti-inflammatory effect in the airways and may significantly reduce the number of infections that patients get and help with symptoms such as cough, sputum production and breathlessness.

What you need to know before you take Azithromycin

Do not take Azithromycin if you are allergic to azithromycin, erythromycin or any macrolide or ketolide antibiotic. Do not take if you are allergic to any of the other ingredients of this medicine.

What dose should I take?

Normally, patients take one capsule (250 mg strength) 3 times a week – usually Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Sometimes patients are prescribed 500 mg 3 times a week and occasionally it is prescribed once a day.

What potential side effects are there?

Overall, Azithromycin is very well tolerated and about 90 % of patients are able to continue with this treatment without significant side effects.

About 10 % of patients cannot tolerate Azithromycin usually due to tummy upset, diarrhoea, constipation, dizziness or development of a skin rash.

Azithromycin can also very occasionally cause changes in your ECG (heart tracing). Your doctors will routinely check your ECG prior to starting the medication.

Azithromycin can also very occasionally upset the liver. We will check your liver function before starting the drug and we routinely ask your GP to check liver blood tests.

Extremely rarely, Azithromycin can lead to hearing loss. The first symptom of this can be tinnitus (ringing in the ears). If you experience this symptom the drug should be stopped immediately. The hearing will usually then improve.

Your doctor will usually ask you to provide 3 sputum samples to check for a particular type of infection caused by a bacteria similar to tuberculosis. It is important that we exclude this infection prior to starting Azithromycin as treatment can mask the infection.

What if I forget to take my Azithromycin?

If you forget to take your Azithromycin, there is no cause for concern and you should just take your next dosage as scheduled.

How long will I be on this medication?

We usually keep a patient on Azithromycin for 3-6 months (if the patient is tolerating it well) before deciding if it is working.